

U.S. Department of Justice

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LAS VEGAS MAN PLEADS GUILTY TO UNLAWFUL DISTRIBUTION OF CONTROLLED SUBSTANCES ON THE INTERNET

LAS VEGAS --Daniel G. Bogden, United States Attorney for the District of Nevada, Mark B. McClellan, M.D., Ph.D. Commissioner of the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), and Loraine E. Brown, Special Agent-in-Charge of the Bureau of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (BICE), Los Angeles Field Office, announce that **CHRISTIAN FREDERIC FINZE**, age 45, a resident of Las Vegas, Nevada, pleaded guilty in U.S. District Court today to Conspiracy to Distribute Controlled Substances (prescription drugs over the internet), in violation of Title 21, United States Code, Section 846. **FINZE** also agreed to forfeit approximately \$269,000 in U.S. Currency, proceeds from the offense seized from a bank account, and computers he used to unlawfully distribute the drugs.

FINZE and co-defendant **JOAN DAVIS**, aka Joan Smith, were indicted in federal court in Las Vegas on December 18, 2002, and charged with various counts of conspiracy, distribution, and importation of controlled substances. **FINZE** pleaded guilty pursuant to a plea agreement. **DAVIS'** case is scheduled for trial beginning September 22, 2003.

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According to court documents, from approximately October 6, 1998, to May 2, 2002, **CHRISTIAN FREDERIC FINZE** distributed prescription drugs over an Internet business known as the "Vince-Online" web site and "Vinci American, Ltd.". Because of their toxicity and other potential harmful effects, prescription drugs are not considered safe for use except under the supervision of a practitioner licensed by law to administer such drugs. Co-defendant Joan Davis is alleged to have assisted **CHRISTIAN FINZE** in carrying out his business. Mr. Finze caused CFF Pharma Consult, a German business established by the defendant, to ship drugs from Germany to customers in the United States. These shipments included 7,200 units of Flunitrazepam, commonly known as Rohypnol and the "date rape drug", and prescribed and sold lawfully for the short-term treatment of insomnia and as a hypnotic medication. Flunitrazepam is not approved for manufacturing or distribution in the United States. Mr. Finze's role in the conspiracy included processing drug orders; depositing and withdrawing the proceeds of the drug sales into and from the bank accounts; ordering drugs from suppliers in Germany; arranging for CFF Pharma Consult to ship the drugs from Germany to customers in the U.S.; and incorporating and serving as the officer and director of Vinci American, Ltd. and CFF Pharma Consult. The drugs were shipped from Germany into the United States through the use of forged and fraudulent documents designed to deceive employees of the U.S. Customs Service and FDA.

"FDA is proud of its role in protecting the public from the reckless distribution of this potentially deadly drug", said FDA Commissioner Mark B. McClellan, M.D., Ph.D, and he commends the U.S. Department of Justice for successfully resolving this case. "This highlights the serious risks posed by internet sites that bypass important safeguards for assuring that patients are properly treated with medicines of known safety and efficacy. Today's action sends a clear message that the U.S. Department of Justice

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and the FDA will aggressively pursue those who endanger the public by operating such illegal sites."

Sentencing is scheduled for November 21, 2003, before Chief U.S. District Judge Philip M. Pro. Until then, he remains released on bond with U.S. Pretrial Services Supervision. Under federal statutes, **CHRISTIAN FINZE** faces up to 20 years in prison and a \$1,000,000 fine. The actual sentence, however, will be dictated by the United States Sentencing Guidelines.

The case is being investigated by Special Agents of the Food and Drug Administration Office of Criminal Investigation and Bureau of Immigration and Customs Enforcement, and is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Margaret Stanish.

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